

**NAME: UDOFIA, EMEDIONG UDEME**

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### **RAPE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE SOCIETY**

There are few categories of crime that affect the community and their victims as much as rape, sexual assaults, and the other so-called or sex crimes. The impact of rape and sexual assault crimes can be observed in the very way we live our lives and raise our children because they affect our overall sense of society. This can be seen in a constant barrage of sex and violence on the media.

However, the problem with rape and sexual offenses is far more complex than just the terrible nature of the crimes themselves and the fear they bring to so many. It is the combination of the crime and the community's reaction coupled with the many myths and victim stereotypes that make this type of crime so difficult to investigate and even more difficult to prosecute.

#### **DEFINITION**

The term rape originates from the Latin rapere (supine stem raptum), "To snatch, to grab, to carry off". Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetrations carried out against a person without the person's consent. It is also an act of sexual intercourse with an individual without his or her consent, through force or the threat of force. Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving having a carnal knowledge, which is initiated by one or more persons against another person without the person's consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or against a person who is incapable of valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, or below the legal age of consent.

In many jurisdictions, the crime of rape has been subsumed under that of sexual assault, which also encompasses acts that fall short of intercourse. Rape was long considered to be caused by unbridled sexual desire, but it is now understood as pathological assertion of power over a victim. The term rape is sometimes used interchangeably with the term sexual assault.

### **EFFECT OF RAPE TO THE VICTIM**

The effect of rape to the woman can either be physically, mentally, or emotionally traumatic. Among the physical effect are unwanted pregnancies, diseases or health problems, and certain disruptions on the woman's natural bodily functions. On the other hand, psychological effect ranges from self-pity to the more striking suicidal tendencies.

1: UNWANTED PREGNANCY: Of course, the most immediate physical effect of rape is the risk for the victim of getting pregnant. Dependent on the age of the victim, she may conceive a child even if she has just reached puberty. In most instances, rape victim who become pregnant opt to abort the child that is considered the result of the crime committed against them. In some cases, the situation is further complicated due to abortion not being a legal option for the victim.

2: DISASSOCIATION/ EMOTIONAL NUMBNESS: For many, an initial reaction to being raped is one of the shock and emotional numbness. Many people initially feel calm and shut off from what happened. This reaction can sometimes surprise friends, family and professionals who expect survivors to be distraught immediately after an assault. However, disassociation is a natural defense mechanism and is perfectly normal. Usually after a few days or weeks you will begin to have a range of other reactions including anger, fear and shock.

3: EXPOSURE OR TRANSMISSION OF CERTAIN DISEASES WITHOUT THEIR KNOWLEDGE. The rape victims are usually at risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS that could affect their health in the short and long term even leading to death.

4: DAMAGE OR DISRUPTION OF BODY ORGANS OR FUNCTIONS: since rape is a form of forced intercourse, the victim's body usually suffers physical injury particularly to the vagina, uterus, and other part of the reproductive system. The risk is greater if the victim is a child or a very young teen. In addition the rape victim are often beaten up and tortured during and after the rape, which might lead to losing their life in most cases.

5: TRAUMA AND PARANOIA: The foremost effect of rape will be emotional trauma and paranoia. At times, the victim will exhibit symptoms of mental and emotional trauma through solitude and exclusion. They also develop fear in mingling and socializing with strangers and other people especially men. These effects can last for the duration of the victims life time.

6: SELF PITY OR SELF BLAME: Apart from making herself isolated, rape can also lead the victim to pity or blame herself for the crime. This effect is partly caused by the social stigma or shame that societies or communities wrongly attributed to the victim. She is often deprived of the care she should receive from families and society at large, who in turn can accuse her of callous and provoking behavior. This worsens her mental state and she is left emotionally devastated.

7: SUICIDAL TENDENCIES: The most striking effect that rape can produce in a victim is the thoughts or tendencies of committing suicide because of trauma, self-pity, and seclusion, rape victims often feel that there is no longer hope and they are not worthy of living.

8: RECURRENT DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES: the victim may experience recurrent dreams and nightmares as the brain tries to process, understand and recover from what has happened. This is normal and the nightmares usually become less frequent over time. Talking about them with someone you trust will help, it might not stop the dreams altogether but it will help them seem less powerful and overwhelming.

### **EFFECT OF RAPE IN THE COMMUNITY**

The individuals who are victims of rape are members of the society and as such the total effect of rape on the victims affects the society as well. The effect of rape to a community or society will essentially revolve around the response the community makes. In the “first world” or more highly developed countries, community response will be positive and encouraging for the victim. Communities provide emotional support for the victim and help her get over the trauma she has faced.

But the scenario is notably different in certain societies like Asia, the Caribbean and other poor countries where rape victims are neglected or the crime itself is not prioritized, community response would always be in a negative way. It could be either in the form of neglect, absence of social and legal justice, and putting the blame on herself. She is often considered as an outcast in the society and she is left alone to battle with the aftermath of the rape.

In countries like India they look down upon girls who are outgoing and prefer to wear western clothes. People often blame the girl for sending out wrong signals to men, thus making her vulnerable to rape. In cases where a woman is raped, she is always in fear of being marked a ‘whore’ or a woman of bad character, which ultimately prevents her from reporting the crime. In some cases, they don’t disclose these attacks to anyone and keep their sufferings to themselves- an immense emotional upheaval which only the victims can be described.

The situation is not much different in Africa and the Caribbean where the number of rape crimes committed on women, have soared radically since three decades ago. The Caribbean society often accuses the raped woman of immoral behavior, tries to force her to forget everything (failing to understand that it’s impossible for a rape victim to do so) putting her in the position of culprit rather than that of the victim. It is time that all humans demand changes to all countries that perpetrate such injustices world-wide. It is time to provide the education and information and encourage discussions that will change society’s attitude towards rape and find ways to eradicate this intolerable social issue once and for all.

In conclusion, sexual violence poses an obstacle to peace and security, it impedes women from participating in peace and democratic processes and in post conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. As a tool of war, it can become a way of life, once entrenched in the fabric of society, it lingers long after the gun has fallen silent. Many women lose their health, livelihoods, husbands and family and support network as a result of rape. This in turn can shatter the structure that anchors community values, and with that disrupt their transmission to future generations. **STOP RAPE! IT IS EVIL! STOP RAPE! AND SAVE THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN!**



